

Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora

(Executed February 17, 1872)

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EVERY country has its own heroes and patriots. Every country has its own martyrs whose lives had been sacrificed at the altar of freedom. Our beloved country, the Philippines, is no exception to this rule. It has its own heroes, patriots and martyrs by whose works we of the present generation are inspired, enlightened, and made free.

Three of these heroes and martyrs, whose names illumine the history of our land and the glory of whose deaths we fittingly observe this month, were Burgos, Gomez and Zamora. Oftentimes called the "glorious trinity" whose martyrdom actually opened the new era of national and political awakening of the Philippines, they occupy a very warm place in the hearts of their countrymen.

The Cavite Revolt took place in 1872. It was the immediate effect of the Governor's order, abolishing the exemption hitherto enjoyed by the workers in the arsenal of Cavite and in the barracks of the artillery and engineering corps from paying tributes, and from the obligation to work on certain days on public works without pay. After the revolt had been suppressed by the government, a number of arrests were

made of those persons believed to have been implicated in the revolt. During the investigation of these persons, it came to pass that many pointed to Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora as the instigators of the plot to overthrow the government. It has been claimed that if the revolt had been successful, a republic would have been proclaimed by the rebels with Burgos as the president.

As to whether these allegations were true, or not, we cannot be very certain. But not a few believed that the connection of these three men with the revolt was a "frame-up" by their enemies. They were taken to the court for trial, each being given a defense attorney. In the course of the trial, and when Burgos' case was taken up, according to Antonio Ma. Regidor, his lawyer did not try to establish the innocence of Burgos but merely asked for clemency, virtually admitting his client's guilt. Upon hearing this, Burgos shouted a denial and accused his attorney of having changed his defense. At any rate, the court condemned Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora and ordered them to die by the garrote. Two days later, February 17, they were executed. The Manila Archbishop, by refusing to unfrock

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them from their priestly habiliments threw grave doubts about their guilt. Up to this time the majority of their countrymen believe that they were not guilty of the crime of which they were accused and therefore have regarded them as martyrs to the Filipino cause and at the hands of the tyrannical Spanish officials.

Jose Burgos was born in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, on February 9, 1837. He studied in San Juan de Letran College and in the University of Sto. Tomas. In the latter institution he took up the career of priesthood, obtaining the degrees of doctor of sacred theology and doctor of canon law which at that time very few had attained. Finding him a man of talent, the authorities soon named him curate of the Cathedral and ecclesiastical fiscal. He also acted as *Canonigo Magistral* in the Cathedral. In the University of Sto. Tomas he became a professor and master of ceremonies. He was, moreover, a writer of distinction and a prominent leader of his people. He championed not only the secularization issue but also the Filipino demands in the agrarian or land question. He preached of racial equality, social justice, and even political reforms. In the name of the secular clergymen he wrote a "Manifesto" to the King of Spain asking the secularization of Philippine parishes. He was only thirty-five years old when he died.

Mariano Gomez, of Sta. Cruz, Manila, like Burgos, pursued the ecclesiastical career, and like him he championed the cause of reforms both in the religious and in the civil order. He was the founder of the newspaper *La Verdad*, which became the mouthpiece of the Filipino reformers. At the time of the Cavite Revolt, he was the curate of Bacoor, Cavite.

Jacinto Zamora was born in Pandacan, Manila, on August 14, 1835. Like Burgos he was educated in San Juan de Letran College and in Sto. Tomas University. In the former he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Canon Law. Of the three leaders he was the least prominent. He was at one time curate of Pasig, Rizal, but during the outbreak of the Revolt, he was curate at the Cathedral. Many believe that his complication in the Revolt was nothing but the product of circumstances, for the investigators found a note in his possession which was interpreted as a proof of his connivance in the affair. The note read thus: "Grand reunion. Don't fail to come. Our friends are coming with good provisions of bullets and powder."

The names of these three martyr-priests are indissolubly linked with the whole history of the Philippines. Their acts have inspired their countrymen to heroism. Every town in this country has dedicated streets, plazas, monuments and other public places to them. Their names have become a by-word in every home. The Katipunan of Bonifacio honored them by having "Gom-Bur-Za" as one of its passwords. Rizal, our greatest patriot, paid a glowing tribute to them by dedicating his novel *El Filibusterismo* "to their memory." The Filipino youth can do their part in honoring them through various ways, such as knowing their lives, emulating their deeds, and by practicing acts of patriotism.